

The Madness of Genre

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“An author—even a Byzantine author—deserves to be regarded as an entity, not to be torn to pieces in the interests of proving the eternal stability of genres.”¹ We need not be led astray by the disarming parenthesis. The volume from which this quotation is taken has transformed the study of Byzantine literature as a serious study in its own right; its authors show nothing but scorn for scholars who delight in discussing Byzantine literature simply to point out how bad it is. It used to be that “Byzantine literature has never had a good press, least of all from its own students,”² but that, after Kazhdan and Franklin, is no longer true. The volume’s opening chapter, which was first given as a paper at the Institut für Byzantinistik in Vienna, points out the inadequacies of the *Handbuch* approach to Byzantine literature before turning to a passionate plea for the study of authors rather than genres. My aim is not to champion one against the other (my own interest lies with the reader), but rather to demonstrate the importance of genre in Byzantine literature in the assessment of both composition and reception.

In many ways neither author nor genre is at the forefront of current literary debate. The tendency is toward depersonalization, to a voice embedded in text, and to an indeterminacy of meaning that ignores generic signals.³ In 1968 Roland Barthes proclaimed the death of the author.⁴ As for genre, that service was provided in 1902 by Benedetto Croce, who proclaimed that every work of art was a genre in itself.⁵ For him, classifying literature according to genre denies its very nature and hence

does violence not only to the sensibility of the critic but also to the object he is studying. In the case of genre, however, there has been a considerable revival. Much literature is emanating from such diverse schools of thought as New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Structuralism, and *Rezeptionstheorie*,⁶ and in classical studies generic analysts have formed something of a school in themselves in the wake of Francis Cairns’ *Generic Composition in Greek and Latin Poetry*.⁷ Since Byzantine literary study is so young, it may be helpful to learn what literary theorists say about genre. The first point is perhaps that, with the possible exception of the classical genericists, no theorist of genre would now proclaim any eternal stability or immutability of genre. Even the indefatigable Paul Hernadi, trying desperately in more than three hundred pages to arrive at a genre diagram that works for more than a short period of time, falls back on the stratagem of modes of discourse “depending on the critic’s approach.”⁸ Most theorists work with the assumption that the immutability of genres is an ancient misapprehension,⁹ as foolish as the assumption that writing within a genre in some way stunts an author’s creativity.¹⁰ For the formalists, genre was important precisely in the dynamics and shifts of one genre system to another.¹¹ For Hans Jauss the tension between synchronic and diachronic visions

¹A. Kazhdan and S. Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1987), viii.

²M. E. Mullett, “Dancing with Deconstructionists in the Gardens of the Muses,” *BMGS* 14 (1990), 258–75, reviewing recent developments in the study of Byzantine literature.

³These and related themes are discussed in V. B. Leitch’s useful *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (London, 1983).

⁴R. Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. and ed. S. Heath (London-New York, 1977), 142–48.

⁵B. Croce, *Estetica*, trans. D. Ainslie (New York, 1968), 38.

⁶For a brisk survey see H. Dubrow, *Genre, The Critical Idiom* 42 (London-New York, 1982), 82–104.

⁷F. Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1972); cf., e.g., J. C. McKeown, “Ovid *Amores* 3.12,” and J. G. Howie, “Sappho *Fr* 94 (LP): Farewell, Consolation and Help in a New Life,” both in *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar*, ed. F. C. Cairns, *ARCA* 3 (Liverpool, 1979), 163–77, 299–342, esp. 330–35.

⁸P. Hernadi, *Beyond Genre: New Directions in Literary Classification* (Cornell, 1972).

⁹See, e.g., A. Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford, 1982), 37.

¹⁰C. Guillen, *Literature as System: Essays towards the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, 1971), 377, 111–12, 120, 129.

¹¹E.g., J. Tynjanov, “On Literary Evolution,” in *Readings in Russian Poetics*, ed. L. Matejka and K. Panaska (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 66–78.

of a genre system enables him to bridge the gap between art history and material history to provide a "new literary history."¹² But for students of Byzantine literature, particularly in the Vienna mold, this is a novel, and dangerous, thought, and for them certainly Kazhdan and Franklin were right to emphasize genre as an indicator that there was no development in Byzantine literature. Just as antiquity for Cairns is a time-free zone, in which generic prescriptions are eternally played and replayed, so for Herbert Hunger and indeed for Cyril Mango¹³ Byzantine literature never really changed, even behind its facade of immutability. I must reject this view, since it appears to undervalue the complexity and sophistication of Byzantine literary discourse, or, to put it more bluntly, to take the Byzantines at face value, or to ignore the enormous social and educational changes like the catastrophes of the mid-sixth century, the Byzantine Dark Ages, the defeat of Mantzikert, and the Comnene revolution, which—as an unregenerate historian—I believe must be analyzed in relation to the way Byzantines wrote and read.

Let us first examine what theorists of genre consider the main benefits of a generic approach, before observing some disadvantages and then proceeding to a discussion of Byzantine systems of genre. All (with the possible exception of Hernadi) agree that classification is not a useful purpose of genre. Many would see genre as a communication system for the use of writers in writing, readers in reading and interpreting;¹⁴ most would allow the role of generic recognition in the reading process: a single paragraph is read differently according to whether it is read as a murder mystery or a *Bildungsroman*.¹⁵ Many see an advantage in setting a work in a historical perspective, to observe the subsequent genre generated by it (every work changes the genre in which it is written).¹⁶ Genre enables a reader to avoid seeing faults of composition rather than a writer's exploitation of an assumed familiarity with a forgotten genre.¹⁷ It enables a writer to play one literary form off another, and show the

advantages and disadvantages of both.¹⁸ It uses an echo of an intrusive genre to cast a shadow of different values and assumptions;¹⁹ it can solve major traditional problems (at least for a time),²⁰ it can illuminate the thought processes of any literary society,²¹ it can aid the detection of parody;²² it can help in evaluation—Is this work good of its kind? More than that?²³—and it offers a backdrop against which to view originality.²⁴ It has been used to defend the determinacy of literary meaning (although this is by no means necessary)²⁵ and to solve various major critical problems; it has been seen as "an organizing principle of the redundancies by which it is possible to break the hermeneutic circle and reconstruct old or difficult works";²⁶ it objectifies response to any piece of ancient poetry;²⁷ it offers a clue to authorial intention, for by opting to write within a genre the writer makes a statement about his relationship with his predecessors, his anxiety, or his influence.²⁸ It locates individuality vis-à-vis intention: "Without knowledge of revenge tragedy Hamlet would be incomprehensible."²⁹ In short it brings the author (for me uncomfortably) back into the spotlight and allows sidelong lunges at his intentions, unhoped for after the depredations of William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley.³⁰ If only half of these claims can be substantiated for Byzantine literature, Kazhdan and Franklin, far from decrying genre should seize upon it as a technique entirely consistent with their own aims and viewpoint.

It is generally agreed that, in contrast to the

¹⁸ Dubrow's example, *Genre*, 25–26, is of romance and fabliau in the juxtaposed *Knight's Tale* and *Miller's Tale*.

¹⁹ Dubrow's examples, *ibid.*, 26–27, are of pastoral in *King Lear* and comedy in *The Jew of Malta*.

²⁰ Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 31.

²¹ Cairns, *ibid.*

²² Dubrow, *Genre*, 24.

²³ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 272–76.

²⁴ R. Cohen, "Innovation and Variation: Literary Change and Georgic Poetry," in *Literature and History*, ed. R. Cohen and M. Krieger (Los Angeles, 1974), 3–42, esp. 5 ff.

²⁵ E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn., 1967).

²⁶ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 278.

²⁷ Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 31.

²⁸ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 257 ff.

²⁹ Fowler, *ibid.*, 262.

³⁰ W. K. Wimsatt and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington, 1954), 3–18; for a revival of discussion see (for literature) D. Newton-De Molina, *On Literary Intention: Critical Essays* (Edinburgh, 1976); (for art) M. Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven, Conn., 1985). No Byzantinist, whether art historian or student of literature, has yet engaged the concept successfully. See, however, a forthcoming study of the "Leo panel" in Hagia Sophia, Constantinople, by Henri Franes.

¹² H. R. Jauss, "Theory of Genres and Medieval Literature," trans. T. Bahti, *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis-Brighton, 1982), 76–109.

¹³ Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 32; C. Mango, "Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror," Inaugural Lecture, University of Oxford (Oxford, 1973).

¹⁴ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 20–22, 256.

¹⁵ Dubrow, *Genre*, 1–3.

¹⁶ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 23.

¹⁷ Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 6; Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 259.

medieval West, genres flourished in Byzantium. Whereas it took a program of research into fourteenth-century commentary on books of the Bible to persuade the scholarly world that the western Middle Ages were not “a generic wasteland or labyrinth” and that it is not true that “medieval writers had no sense of genre,”³¹ it is an implicit assumption of Byzantinists that Byzantine writers were generically very self-conscious. (Why else produce *Handbücher* organized by secular, religious, and popular literatures and within those headings by genre?) And clearly the *Souda* is frequently concerned with fitting a work into the right slot and Photios is aware of the kind of work he is reading.³² It is a commonplace in Byzantine high-style works to draw back from the edge of expressing what they wish to say in *topoi*, language, or length more appropriate to another genre.³³ The importance of rhetoric in Byzantine education and beyond is clearly an important factor here, as is the copying and use of Menander through the Byzantine period.³⁴ But not all genres appear in Menander, nor to my knowledge is there a Byzantine treatise on the system of genres. There would in fact have to be several, for it is just as fluid a situation as in the medieval West, or Renaissance English—in contrast to Cairns’ view of classical literature.

So we must draw our own genre diagrams to represent the range of choice available to both writer and consumer at any one time. To do this for the entire Byzantine period is clearly unrealistic, so for the purposes of this paper I shall take two particularly interesting points in the development of the Byzantine genre system and analyze them from the viewpoint of H. R. Jauss’ procedure (first synchronically, then with a brief diachronic perspective, then in relation to the wider history of the period)³⁵ and try to assess the usefulness of a

generic approach to cultural history. The two points I have chosen are the years 550 and 1100.

As soon as we attempt to do this and map the genres in current use at any time, we fall into the morass of definitions that has bedeviled generic study.³⁶ Do we mean external forms like the sonnet (or for us, the *kontakion*)? Do we mean internal modes like kinds of subject matter? What is the difference between a genre, a form, a mode? Do we attempt to force our genres into a rhetorical strait-jacket? Or are they happily sitting inside the jacket and laughing at us?

What is clear first of all is that Aristotle’s big three—epic, comedy, and tragedy³⁷—are of no use at all to the classification of Byzantine genres, and that Plato’s distinction between lyric (authorial), dramatic (figured), and narrative (mixed)³⁸ must be considerably elaborated before it fits the Byzantine picture. This is only to be expected, surely; we are not dealing with classical genres. And there are distinct limitations to taking Menander as a sole guide, in the Cairnsian manner: for one thing, straight-down-the-middle *basilikoi logoi* were probably more common at any time in Byzantium than poems in which a major participant can be identified as a “good king”:³⁹ there was an institutional and performance basis for a great deal of Byzantine rhetorical literature perhaps lacking at earlier periods.

I think it is clear that we need both the conventional distinctions in terms of form—epic, epigram, and so on—and also the occasional types in terms of content—epibaterion, *basilikos logos*, and so on. These two axes meet at the genre in question; the *form* provides an element of performance or reception (oral or written, reciprocal or not, delivered at a single sitting or more) together with determination of discourse; and the “rhetorical” *type* provides the occasion, function, and status and transactional relationships between the implied speaker and the implied recipient. In terms of form we move from oral delivery at one sitting, either reciprocal (dialogue or dramation, antiphonal hymnography or even hymns with a refrain; letter in an exchange) or one-way (epigram in a *kyklos*, a speech, or a sermon), through oral deliv-

³¹ A. Minnis, “Discussion of ‘Authorial Role’ and ‘Literary Form’ in Late Medieval Scriptural Exegesis,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 99 (1977), 37–65.

³² The literary criticism of the Byzantines is an open field; see G. L. Kustas, “The Literary Criticism of Photios,” *Hellenika* 16 (1988–89), 132–69; A. R. Dyck, *Michael Psellos: The Essays on Euripides and George of Pisidia and on Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*, *ByzVindo* 16 (Vienna, 1986). Sometimes, as with Procopius’ *Anekdata*, in the *Souda* generic labeling surprises.

³³ Not always disingenuously, as in Anna Komnene’s determination to avoid the label of encomium in her introduction to the *Alexiad*.

³⁴ D. Russell and N. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), xl–xliv; more work remains to be done.

³⁵ H. R. Jauss, “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,” *New Literary History* 2 (1970), 7–37, repr. in *Towards an Aesthetic of Reception*, 3–45 at 36 ff.

³⁶ See, e.g., J. P. Strelka, *Theories of Literary Genre* (University Park, Pa.-Pasadena-London, 1978).

³⁷ Aristotle, *Poetics*, *passim*.

³⁸ Plato, *Republic*, 392C–D.

³⁹ E.g., F. Cairns, *Virgil’s Augustan Epic* (Cambridge, 1989), chap. 2, 29–57, contains sections on Dido as good king in book I (pp. 38–42) and then as bad king in book I also, but above all in book IV (42–57).

ery at one of many sittings like hagiography, the gerontikon, the novel perhaps, epic while the going was good, even history, to the other end of the spectrum, the treatise or the epigram in stone, designed to be read rather than heard. This may overstate the oral nature of Byzantine performance and it is a very tricky area, but I think there is a balance here that needs to be redressed.⁴⁰

The basic forms then are dialogue, logos, letter, lyric (in whatever meter), and narrative (whether history or epic). The basic types are the literary expression of the great human occasions—birth, marriage, death, travel, career, power relations. Not all of these appear in rhetorical handbooks; as Cairns points out, there is a limited marketable value for some of them (komos is his example).⁴¹ Even when, with the end of the Egyptian poetry boom,⁴² the bottom of the market dropped out of literature, noncommercial genres were not added to theoretical treatments.

Let us take as one example the Byzantine death genres, on which Margaret Alexiou published her seminal study⁴³ without appearing to touch the great mass of rhetorical treatments of the subject.⁴⁴ The three basic functions of death writing are commemoration (in Alexiou's terms the man's part), mourning (in Alexiou's terms the woman's part), and comforting. In rhetorical terms epitaphios, threnos, and consolatio. Each of these can be couched in several different forms in the Byzantine deathchamber. The epitaphios is normally a logos, but of course can be encapsulated in stone;⁴⁵ the threnos is most frequently in verse form, whether iambic or anacreontic, but there are just as many versions of the logos (and therefore prose) equivalent, the monody.⁴⁶ The paramythetikos logos has a very frequent small brother in the consolatory letter;⁴⁷ indeed letters at some time or

another in Byzantium cover most aspects of death and bereavement from simple announcement on. The way (level of style, length, tone) in which the aspect of death is treated depends on the form; it is the type which provides the topoi and the occasion.

There is no problem in incorporating into this system the concept of sub-genres: passio and bios in hagiography,⁴⁸ ecclesiastical history, classicizing history, world chronicle, biography in historiography,⁴⁹ kontakion and canon in hymns,⁵⁰ once the fusion of form and type is assumed. It is also possible to borrow wholesale theoretical treatments of the mixing of genres from other societies: Alastair Fowler's concept of modulation,⁵¹ or the creation of new genres, might be tested with respect to Byzantine literature; as can Cairns' concept of inclusion,⁵² the combination of two genres within one work, with one dominant and the other secondary. Some kinds of writing will escape meeting on the crossing of the axes: they are after all very practical, occasional, transactional, social, and not all literature will fit. The letter may perhaps serve as an example. In Janet Altman's important book about epistolary discourse she talks about "approaching a form,"⁵³ and this is clearly what the letter is, a *form*. In Byzantium it has a clearly defined size, shape, set of expectations, topoi, discourse, level of style, as well as a clearly understood ceremonial of exchange, encumbered with gift exchange including stinking fish, poem exchange, and minor lending libraries.⁵⁴ When the types meet the axis of

⁴⁰ See my "Writing in Early Mediaeval Byzantium," in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europe*, ed. R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), 156–85.

⁴¹ Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 76.

⁴² Alan Cameron, "Wandering Poets in Byzantine Egypt," *Historia* 14 (1965), 470–509.

⁴³ M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge, 1974).

⁴⁴ J. Soffel, *Die Regeln Menanders für die Leichenrede in ihrer Tradition dargestellt: Herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert, Beiträge für klassische Philologie* 57 (Meisenheim am Glan, 1974).

⁴⁵ See, e.g., W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos: Historische Gedichte*, WByzSt 11 (Vienna, 1974), poems 25–26, 28–29, 39, 48–50, 58, 60, 64–67, 75–76.

⁴⁶ D. Hadjis, "Was bedeutet 'Monodie' in der byzantinischen Literatur?," *Byzantinische Beiträge*, ed. J. Irmscher (Berlin, 1964), 177–85.

⁴⁷ "Demetrios," τύποι ἐπιστολικός, 5, ed. V. Weichert, *Demetrii et Libanii qui feruntur τύποι ἐπιστολικός et ἐπιστολμαῖοι*

χαρακτήρες (Leipzig, 1910), 4–5; "Libanios," ἐπιστολμαῖοι χαρακτήρες, 21, ed. Weichert, 28; *Menander*, ed. Russell and Wilson, 170–79 for consolatory elements in the epitaphios; for analyses of a single Byzantine consolatio, see R. J. H. Jenkins, "A 'Consolatio' of the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus," *Byzantion* 35 (1965), 159–66; J. F. Mitchell, "A Consolatio of the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus—Further Remarks," *ibid.*, 37 (1967), 136–42.

⁴⁸ On generic subdivisions in hagiography, see still H. Delehay, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels, 1921).

⁴⁹ For historical options in late antiquity, see most economically B. Croke and A. M. Emmett, "Historiography in Late Antiquity: An Overview," *History and Historians in Late Antiquity* (Sydney-Oxford, 1983), 1–12.

⁵⁰ For genre in hymnography, E. Wellesz, "The Poetical Forms of Byzantine Hymnography," in *New Oxford History of Music*, II (London-New York, 1954), 19–30; *idem*, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford, 1961), 171–245.

⁵¹ Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 191–212.

⁵² Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 158–76.

⁵³ J. Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus, 1982).

⁵⁴ See my "The Language of Diplomacy," in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. S. Franklin and J. Shepard (forthcoming).

form, genres are created: the recommendatory letter, the propemptic letter, the kletic letter, the consolatio are the result—many of the epistolomaioi charakteres of the theoretical literature.⁵⁵ But there are many letters hard to fix along that axis and the homogeneity of the form tends to impress rather than the individual nature of these genres. Letters can be freestanding, or they may be preserved in a letter collection, which as a selected and deliberately preserved group may be read as analogous to the epistolary novel. And “inclusion” is common with letters, as with speeches: historiography and later the novel abound with included examples of genres, as yet unstudied. In this view then, genre is not so much a taxonomy, more a way of life. With this rather arid discussion of synchronic genres, we should be ready to look at the first of our chosen dates.

The year 550 may not seem an ideal choice in that it comes at the beginning of Roger Scott's postulated decade of silence for Justinianic literature. But in a sense the dating of sixth-century literature is still under discussion,⁵⁶ and the advantages of looking at the mid-sixth century are enormous. It is the only period of Byzantine literary history where there has already been any serious generic study, and in addition it is a time of great flux and mixing of genres, not in the sense of modulation or of inclusion but of sheer mixing.

If we are to identify the horizon of generic expectation of literary society at the time, we need not of course include only genres written at that date; we may look at genres written shortly earlier and then again later. Old genres are on their way out: epic has a last fling in hexameters in Africa before fusing ceremonially with ekphrasis and encomium, and even the hexameters are at a last ebb.⁵⁷ Other old genres revived quite recently appear at their height: the epigram, the fictional letter, the classicizing history.⁵⁸ New genres flourish: hagiography will soon take on a new official

tinge;⁵⁹ ecclesiastical history and the world chronicle proliferate,⁶⁰ the kontakion appears to have eclipsed the homily for a short time.⁶¹ What is in short supply is straight rhetoric: at a time when panegyric overshadows everything, curiously no freestanding basilikos logos for the reign of Justinian, no funeral orations, no uncomplicated ekphraseis.⁶² Whether the reason is to be sought for this in the shift to vocational education favored by Justinian⁶³ or whether we should seek literary explanations is an interesting question, but I think the problem exists. What was written instead was hybrid: a ceremonial panegyric ekphrasis in epic hexameters (and an iambic prologue); a psogos in content set in a history, at least at the beginning, which then gives up any apparent form; an encomium in the form of a series of ekphraseis with a historical prooimium.⁶⁴ But this is not modulation: these solutions served for a comparatively short time, sometimes for no more than a single work. The connection with the social background needs no emphasis; Averil Cameron and Roger Scott have carefully documented the ways in which important realignments find an expression in literature, tensions resolved with the new alliances of the late sixth century.⁶⁵ The problem is more on

ing history Averil and Alan Cameron, “Christianity and Tradition in the Historiography of the Late Roman Empire,” *CQ*, n.s. 14 (1964), 316–28 is still fundamental, but R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicizing Historians of the Later Roman Empire*, ARCA 6 and 10 (Liverpool, 1981–83), together with his work on Menander Protector and Whitby's on Theophylact Simocatta, marks a new stage in our understanding.

⁵⁵See the forthcoming translation of and commentary on Eustratios, *Life of Eutychios* by Averil Cameron and A. M. Wilson; see the preliminary studies of Averil Cameron, “Eustratius's *Life of the Patriarch Eutychios* and the Fifth Ecumenical Council,” in *Kathegetria: Essays Presented to J. Hussey for Her 80th Birthday*, ed. J. Chrysostomides (Camberley, 1988), 225–47; eadem, “Models of the Past in the Late Sixth Century: The Life of the Patriarch Eutychios,” in *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Clarke, B. Croke, and R. Mortley (Canberra, 1990), 205–23.

⁶⁰For ecclesiastical history see R. A. Markus, “Church History and the Early Church Historians,” *Studies in Church History* 11 (1975), 1–17; for world chronicles see now chap. 2, “Byzantine Chronicle Writing,” by B. Croke and R. Scott in *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. E. Jeffreys with B. Croke and R. Scott, Byzantina Australiensia 6 (Sydney, 1990), 27–54.

⁶¹For homily see the forthcoming study by Mary Cunningham; the suggestion was made by Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 204.

⁶²Cf. E. Catafygiotu Topping, “On Earthquakes and Fires: Romanos' Encomium to Justinian,” *BZ* 71 (1978), 22.

⁶³On the political significance of education see R. Scott, “Malalas and His Contemporaries,” in *Studies in John Malalas*, 76–78.

⁶⁴Paul the Silentiary, *Ekphrasis*; Procopius, *Anekdotai*; Procopius, *De aedificiis*, respectively.

⁶⁵Notably Averil Cameron, “Images of Authority: Élites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium,” *Past and Present* 84

⁵⁵*Demetrii et Libanii*, ed. Weichert (above, note 47).

⁵⁶R. Scott, “Malalas, *The Secret History*, and Justinian's Reform Legislation,” *DOP* 39 (1985), 99–109, but see my “Romanos's Kontakia on the XL Martyrs: Date and Context,” *The XL Martyrs of Sebasteia*, ed. M. E. Mullett and A. M. Wilson, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 2 (Belfast, 1992), for a proposal to date two poems into the 550s.

⁵⁷Generic fusion was studied by E. D. Lasky, “Encomiastic Elements in the *Dionysiaka* of Nonnos,” *Hermes* 106 (1978), 357–87 and T. Nissen, “Historische Epos und Panegyrikos in der Spätantike,” *Hermes* 75 (1940), 298–325.

⁵⁸For the epigram see still Averil and Alan Cameron, “The Cycle of Agathias,” *JHS* 86 (1966), 6–25; for the fictional letter see W. G. Arnott, “Pastiche, Pleasantry, Prudish Eroticism in the Letters of Aristaenetos,” *YCS* 27 (1982), 291–320; for classiciz-

the level of evaluation: are we to see the hybrids as brilliantly original attempts to break the law of genre or as symptoms of an educational decline that will lead within a century into the Byzantine Dark Age? In any case, it is almost a case of anything goes: Scott almost goes as far sometimes as to suggest that it was possible in the mid-sixth century to criticize the laudandus.⁶⁶

Whatever decision is reached on this issue, it is clear that generic analysis has already helped enormously towards our understanding of the mid-sixth century in two areas in particular. Eva Topping's attempt⁶⁷ to produce a generic analysis of the *Entry into Jerusalem* of Romanos and to label it a basilikos logos fails on various counts. She is let down partly by the distortion of typology as synkrisis, partly by the elements of dialogue which detract from the stance of rhetor to laudandus, and partly by the unsubtle handling of the adventus theme, which let her down. But she has pointed us to a vast realm of the imperial and ceremonial dimension in Romanos' poetry at a time for which the lack of ceremonial features in literature has been noted. And if neither the *Entry* nor *Earthquakes and Fires* is most accurately described as basilikos logos, the imperial nature of their vocabulary and topoi is indubitable. What is more likely, in the climate of the mid-sixth century, than that ceremony should move indoors into church?⁶⁸

The other area in which generic analysis has already solved an ancient problem is of course the writings of Procopius. Only by defining the generic cast of individual works and by assessing their significance (avoiding the easy trap of assuming that once a genre is defined then the author is not being "sincere") could Averil Cameron make the real Procopius please stand up.⁶⁹ Authors, again, are reached through (not by avoiding) generic discussion.

Can as much be said for the turn of the eleventh century? Again at first sight it appears a barren patch: Alexios I Komnenos is not renowned for his patronage of literature, although current research may go some way to rescue his reputation a little from Lowell Clucas' depiction of him as an uncultured backwoodsman who knew nothing about literature, but knew what he liked.⁷⁰ But it is an equally interesting point in the development of genres, types, and forms, not least because of a growing confusion over the function of prose and verse and of the development of a hybrid form, the politikos stichos.⁷¹ But here generic analysis has hardly started at all, and there is a great deal to do.

The most important thing to grasp is that the turn of the eleventh century comes well into a revival of rhetoric unprecedented in the empire.⁷² Rhetorical commentators set the scene, Psellos and his cronies created a demand, and from the 1080s onward *maistores tōn rhētorōn* were appointed to lead the field on state occasions. For the twelfth century we have a tremendous store of logoi of all kinds: religious polemic is particularly popular, but we have an impressive series of speeches to the emperor for 6 January, funerary speeches of all kinds, sermons, and from the twelfth century inaugural lectures and speeches to the patriarch, progymnasmata, and elaborate prefaces to wills and typika.⁷³ A rhetorical training was again the stepping-stone to some offices in church and state, sometimes culminating in a bishopric⁷⁴ when the training came in useful—writing sermons for the faithful and complaining letters home. This mass of rhetorical works overshadows the rest of the writing of the time, but some clear developments are apparent. Alexios' own commissions (an alpha-

(1979), 3–35, throws a great deal of light on the earlier 6th century.

⁶⁶Scott, "Malalas, the *Secret History*," 108; for the rule see Cairns, *Generic Composition*, 4.

⁶⁷E. Topping, "Romanos, On the Entry into Jerusalem: A Basilikos Logos," *Byzantion* 47 (1977), 65–91.

⁶⁸C. Mango, *Byzantium, the Empire of New Rome* (London, 1980), 82, noticed by Kazhdan and Franklin, *Studies*, 12; for adjustments in ceremony see also S. MacCormack, "Christ and Empire, Time and Ceremonial in Sixth-Century Byzantium and Beyond," *Byzantion* 52 (1982), 287–309.

⁶⁹Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London, 1985); Katherine Adshead's comment on this work that it "rules out the simple interpretation of these works as unrelated products of different genres," *Reading the Past in Late Antiquity*, 93, suggests an undervaluing of the contribution of generic analysis to the assessment she commends.

⁷⁰L. Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century* (Munich, 1981), 95–98 ff. For a reassessment see Alexios I Komnenos, II. *Works*, ed. and trans. R. H. Jordan and C. Roueché, BBT 4 (forthcoming), and D. F. J. Leeson, "Imperial Orthodoxy: Heresy and Politics in the Reign of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118)," M.A. thesis (Belfast, 1987), e.g., 22–28.

⁷¹See M. Alexiou and D. Holton, "The Origins and Development of 'politikos stichos,' a Select Critical Bibliography," *Manatoforos* 9 (1976), 22–34; M. Jeffreys, "Byzantine Metrics: Non-Literary Strata," in XVI. *Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress, Akten*, 1.1, *JÖB* 31.1 (1981), 313–34.

⁷²G. L. Kustas in his *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric*, *Analekta Vlatadon* 13 (Thessaloniki, 1973) sees what is missed by G. L. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors*, *A History of Rhetoric* 3 (Princeton, 1983).

⁷³For a survey see my *Theophylact through His Letters*, Ph.D. diss. (Birmingham, 1981), fig. II.

⁷⁴No study of 12th-century career structures yet exists. I hope to address this problem myself in a study of 12th-century literary society.

bet by Stephen Physopalamites, Euthymios Zigabenos' *Dogmatic Panoply*, some rather conventional occasional poetry by the court doctor Nicholas Kallikles) appear unexciting, but what is possibly his own composition, the *Mousai*, a work of parainesis in dodecasyllables dedicated to his son John, was part of a vogue for parainesis visible from the time of Kekaumenos and found in many forms: poetic, the treatise, the logos. This could be regarded as being in keeping with the new morality of the Comnene revolution when family values came to the fore with the family at the center of things.⁷⁵ No wonder there is a parallel attraction for fictional narrative, which again crosses formal though not generic boundaries: some of Psellos' flights of fantasy, the after-dinner stories of Kekaumenos and the imported Syntipas have been seen as the natural forerunners to the first literary appearance of Digenes Akritas, described by Paul Magdalino unforgettably as "a man's man who lived in the country, never met an intellectual, and devoted his life to sex and violence."⁷⁶ Digenes is a deeply nostalgic narrative, deeply imbedded in the aftermath of Mantzikert, as Roderick Beaton has shown also of another contemporary work, the *Timarion*. Digenes is nostalgic for the lost Anatolia, but also for the good life available before the Comnene clampdown. But literary society did not take itself entirely seriously, as the *Timarion* shows, ushering in several similar satiric efforts in the twelfth century.⁷⁷ The strange thing is the genres disappearing at the time: in the new piety of Anna Dalassene's court (run more like a monastery) there might have been some use for hymnography and certainly for hagiography, but as Magdalino showed, though there were several holy men under Alexios there are no Lives, and theirs, written later in the twelfth century, are the last until the Palaiologan revival.⁷⁸

Two generic problems at the turn of the eleventh century have already emerged; Paul Gautier

showed⁷⁹ that the work that had always been described as a Mirror for Princes, the *Paideia Basilikē*, was simply a basilikos logos addressed to the child co-emperor Constantine. By comparing it with a basilikos logos delivered shortly afterwards by the same rhetor to Alexios Komnenos, I was able to show that features previously thought to be remarkable in the *Paideia Basilikē* can be exactly paralleled in the other speech.⁸⁰ Another problem as yet unsolved is the interesting question of parody. We have seen that theorists of genre believe that parody is one question that can be clarified by generic analysis, and there is plenty of scope in the twelfth century. Alexiou has recently argued for parody of encomium in the portrait of the local official in the *Timarion*, without persuading all those most familiar with straight encomium.⁸¹ And in Ruth Macrides' recent study of a twelfth-century verse confession, there is full and rigorous consideration, and rejection, of the possibility that it is a parody—but in the absence of clear generic company for the poem further progress is difficult.⁸² But, if the decision to parody a genre at the very least indicates some involvement with its values,⁸³ generic study in this area may well be the best way forward.

So in two periods of Byzantine literature it is possible to see genre as an indicator of instability rather than an eternal touchstone. Let us examine the workings of genre in a single text, the letters of Theophylaktos of Ohrid.⁸⁴

I show elsewhere how, like art, genre in Theophylaktos can be used to say the unsayable,⁸⁵ but here I take a group of letters, from Theophylaktos to Gregory the nephew of Michael Taronites.⁸⁶ He

⁷⁹P. Gautier, *Théophylacte d'Achrida: Discours, Traités, Poésies*, CFHB XVI.1 (Thessaloniki, 1980), 48.

⁸⁰M. E. Mullett, "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-basilissa Maria," 208–10.

⁸¹M. Alexiou, "Literary Subversion and the Aristocracy in Twelfth-Century Byzantium: A Stylistic Analysis of the *Timarion* (ch 6–10)," *BMGS* 8 (1982–83), 29–45.

⁸²R. Macrides, "Poetic Justice in the Patriarchate, Murder and Cannibalism in the Provinces," *Cupido Legum*, ed. L. Burgmann, M.-Th. Fögen, and A. Schmink (Frankfurt, 1985), 137–68.

⁸³Dubrow, *Genre*, 24.

⁸⁴*Théophylacte d'Achrida, Lettres, Introduction, Textes, Traduction et Notes*, ed. P. Gautier, CFHB 16.2 (Thessaloniki, 1986). I refer to Gautier's numbering of letters henceforth as G1, G2, and so on.

⁸⁵See my *Theophylact: Reading a Byzantine's Letters*, forthcoming. For the parallel function of visual art see R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold* (London, 1985), 242.

⁸⁶For the Taronites family see N. Adontz, "Les Taronites à Byzance," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 21–42, a continuation of his earlier articles, "Les Taronites en Arménie et à Byzance," *ibid.*, 9 (1934), 715–38; 10 (1945), 531–51; and a followup in *Byzantion* 14 (1939), 407–13. See also G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1972), I.3, 1501; on the marriage of Michael

⁷⁵On parainesis see C. Roueché in *Alexios I Komnenos*, I. *Papers of the Second Belfast Byzantine International Colloquium*, ed. M. E. Mullett and D. C. Smythe, *BBTT* 4 (forthcoming); on family values, see my "The 'Disgrace' of the Ex-basilissa Maria," *BSI* 45 (1984), 208–10.

⁷⁶See R. Beaton, *The Greek Novel AD 1–1985* (London, 1988), especially the papers by Roueché and Beaton. P. Magdalino, "Byzantine Snobbery," *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX–XIII Centuries*, ed. M. Angold, *BAR Int. Ser.* 221 (Oxford, 1984), 69.

⁷⁷R. Beaton, "Cappadocians at Court," in *Alexios I Komnenos*, I.

⁷⁸P. Magdalino, "The Byzantine Holy Man in the Twelfth Century," in *The Byzantine Saint*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), 51–66; see also P. Armstrong, "The Lives of Meletios of Myoupolis," M.A. thesis (Belfast, 1989).

writes four letters⁸⁷ to this famous rebel of Alexios' reign, hailing him as a military hero, in terms not far from those of a formal eulogy, and unequaled in his correspondence except for John Doukas, who was undoubtedly one of the great military successes of the period.⁸⁸ The problem is not a new one. Even before the letters of Theophylaktos were brought into play, suspicions had been aroused by Anna's account of the affair in the *Alexiad*.⁸⁹ There she describes how in the twelfth indiction (1103–4) Gregory Taronites was appointed doux of Trebizond, how he revolted, capturing the outgoing governor and ignoring all letters from the capital until his cousin John was sent in the fourth indiction to bring him home. Georgina Buckler found the story "so inconsequent" that she suspected Anna of confusing the identity of the major figure on the grounds that when first mentioned, he is called only Gregory, and Anna claims to have mentioned him before; only later is he called Taronites. The only Gregory who has previously appeared in the narrative is Gregory Gabras, last heard of safely locked up in Philippopolis sometime around 1093.⁹⁰ There are puzzling elements in the story: why should Gregory have wanted to capture Dabatenos, already on his way back to Constantinople? Why did he write a letter of criticism about the senate? Why did John Taronites refuse to speak to his cousin on the way back? Why did Alexios pretend to blind him, and why was he so suddenly released and showered with honors?

As Buckler remarked,⁹¹ none of these problems is solved by comparing Anna's account with the letters of Theophylaktos. Nicolas Adontz in a rather confused article made the position even more difficult by demonstrating that Gregory was in the Pontos in May 1103, for in a letter to Gregory then operating in that part of the world Theophylaktos congratulates him on his handling of negotiations

about the ransoming of "the Frank," whom Adontz identified with Bohemond.⁹² Alice Leroy-Molinghen, writing at the same time, showed that this letter is part of a series of three: G78 was written to Gregory when he first reached Colchis;⁹³ G81 was written after Gregory had already made his mark, had freed Greek cities around the Black Sea from paying tribute to Danishmend, inflicted defeats on Danishmend and been instrumental in securing the release of Bohemond, or (as she has it) of Richard of the Principate.⁹⁴ G92 was written after Gregory had returned from Colchis to Constantinople, leaving the Pontos bereft and at uneasy peace.⁹⁵ It is this last letter which causes the worst difficulty, but G81 is difficult also in that the release of Bohemond is datable to spring or summer 1103.⁹⁶ According to Anna, Gregory was not appointed until September 1103 at the earliest, and he is described as meeting the outgoing governor on the way. It would seem that Gregory was appointed doux after he had already pulled off the great success of his term of office, then revolted, and returned in triumph.

Various solutions to this curious conundrum have been offered. (1) Anna is mistaken: Gregory Taronites was there in 1103, either as doux or as general of a specific military force, and in the twelfth indiction Gregory Gabras was appointed doux, went out, revolted, and was brought back to John Taronites.⁹⁷ (2) Anna is misleading: Gregory Taronites went twice, once in the spring of 1103 and once in the twelfth indiction and only the sec-

Taronites see A. Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte*, MiscByzMonac 1 (Munich, 1965), 21.

⁸⁷ See G65, G78 (identification pointed out by A. Leroy-Molinghen, *Byzantion* 11 [1936], 589; G81, G92.

⁸⁸ G8, G17; see D. Polemis, *The Doukai* (London, 1968), 66–70; K. Roth, *Studie zu den Briefen des Theophylaktos Bulgarus* (Ludwigshafen am Rhein, 1900), 14–15; Theophylaktos wrote to him once while still doux of Dyrrachion and once while still preparing to sail to Crete and Cyprus.

⁸⁹ Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, XII.vii.1–4, ed. B. Leib (Paris, 1967), III, 75–77.

⁹⁰ G. Buckler, *Anna Comnena: A Study* (Oxford, 1929), 254.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 276 note 1. Even now, with the new edition, the dating of the letters remains problematic; see my review forthcoming in *BSL*.

⁹² N. Adontz, "L'archevêque Théophylacte et le Taronite," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 577–88.

⁹³ A. Leroy-Molinghen, "Les lettres de Théophylacte de Bulgarie à Grégoire Taronites," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), 589–92.

⁹⁴ G81, 427.13; 431.69.

⁹⁵ G92, 473.12.

⁹⁶ For the release of Bohemond from captivity by Danishmend, see H. Hagenmeyer, "Chronologie du royaume de Jérusalem," *ROL* 12 (1908), 73.

⁹⁷ This is the solution suggested, but not worked out, by Buckler, *Anna Comnena*, 254, and decided upon by Adontz, "L'archevêque Théophylacte," 588; Leroy-Molinghen accepts it as a possible solution. Some authorities suggest that Gregory Taronites was there in the capacity of doux before 1103–4, Adontz even claiming that he *must* have been doux if Gregory served before Dabatenos (on the latter see Gautier, "Le synode des Blachernes (fin 1094): Etude prosopographique," *REB* 29 [1971], 245–46), who is clearly described by Anna as the previous doux. If Gregory served *before* Dabatenos he would run into the term of office of Theodore Gabras; see A. A. M. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades, 979–c. 1653," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12 (1969–70), 176, and he must be there in 1103.

⁹⁸ This solution was offered by Leroy-Molinghen as a possibility, but taken up by surprisingly few students of the question; latterly J. Shepard, "Another New England? Anglo-Saxon Settlement on the Black Sea," *ByzSt* 1 (1974), 18–39 settles for

ond visit is mentioned. She also claims, wrongly, to have referred to him before.⁹⁸ (3) Anna is deliberately misleading: Gregory was in the Pontos all along from 1103–6 and besides mistaking the date of his appointment, Anna invented treachery where none existed; he in fact returned in triumph (Theophylaktos) and Alexios trumped up an excuse to keep him quiet.⁹⁹ (4) Theophylaktos gets it wrong and was too far from events to understand what was happening.¹⁰⁰ (5) The Armenian and western sources are wrong and Bohemond was not released until the twelfth indiction (this must be combined with 4 or 3).¹⁰¹ (6) Gregory Taronites was Gregory Gabras.¹⁰²

this answer, though he would like to see Gregory active around Tmutorokan, following Litavrin, “À propos de Tmutorakan,” *Byzantion* 35 (1965), 221–34, and at the turn of the 11th century rather than just before the twelfth indiction. This solution requires Anna to have omitted mention of Gregory’s successes, perhaps out of consideration for Alexios’s; or they could have been the context in which she intended to introduce Gregory’s name.

⁹⁹The original solution of Adontz, “L’archevêque Théophylacte”; this demands more revision of Anna’s account than any other: Dabatenos must be eliminated, the date of the twelfth indiction altered to the eleventh at least, and Anna convicted of gross distortion of the remaining facts. Although Leib in his article, “Complots à Byzance contre Alexios I Comnène (1081–1118),” *BSI* 23 (1962), 250–75, does not seem to see any problem and recounts the revolt of Taronites in 1103 and of Gregory Gabras in 1094–96, in his study of “Les silences d’Anne Comnène, ou ce que n’a pas dit l’Alexiade,” *BSI* 19 (1958), 1–11, he considers that Anna may have overplayed some of the plots against her father.

¹⁰⁰See the comments of Adontz, “L’archevêque Théophylacte,” 581; I. Melikoff, *La geste de Melik Danishmend: Etude critique du Danishmendname*, I (Paris, 1960), 118: “Il y a un exagération évidente dans les lettres de Théophylacte.”

¹⁰¹For there is still the problem of Gregory’s return in triumph or disgrace to Constantinople.

¹⁰²An extreme solution and an oddly popular one, but note the faint dissent of Shepard, “Anglo-Saxon Settlement,” 25: “No convincing case has yet been made for identifying Gregory Gabras with Gregory Taronites”; Bryer, “A Byzantine Family,” 174: “The identity of Gregory Gabras with Gregory Taronites, although long accepted, cannot be proved beyond doubt.” Nor can it be disproved beyond doubt. Its supporters include C. Cahen and A. A. Vasiliev, who in *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 154–55, states his “opinion” on the simple grounds of Anna’s “vagueness.” Yet she is not vague about the family of her rebel, defining his relationship to John, who was sent after him, and John’s to the emperor: XII.vii, ed. Leib, III, 76. Only Bryer’s neat postulation that Theodore Gabras’ first wife Eirene was in fact a Taronitissa makes this possible at all; and Anna does say that the relationship was through the *male* side of the family, Gregory’s father. If the identification was to be accepted, there would be nothing inherently unlikely in a Gabras assuming his mother’s name, although it was more common for women (e.g., Eirene, daughter of Anna Komnene) to keep their paternal name rather than assume their husband’s. On the assumption of the maternal cognomen, see Zacos and Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals*, I.3, 1440, and Polemis, *Doukai*, 2–3. However, was Taronites a more desirable name than Gabras at the time? Surely after 1094 the main reason for this had been

In fact the question is not even as simple as this, for yet another source must be brought to bear on the same events: the *Melikdanishmendname*. According to Irène Mélikoff, this heroic poem, although written down only in the thirteenth century and surviving only in a fourteenth-century version, preserves an oral record of events around the Black Sea shortly before the death of Danishmend in the summer of 1104. Certainly the account tallies remarkably well with the events mentioned in G81: the epic tells the story of a reverse of fortune at the end of the life of Danishmend caused by an alliance of the beg of Trebizond, begs of Georgia and Armenia, the beg of Ahlat, the beg of Hagumbed, and the two sons of Gabras. This resulted in an expedition against Neocaesarea, the reconquest of Greek cities, and the death of Danishmend during a campaign against Hagumbed. The letter certainly refers to victories over Danishmend, the recapture of Greek cities around the Black Sea, and a projected expedition against Neocaesarea. Before testing this information against the solutions listed above, let us look at the generic makeup of the evidence at our disposal and the kind of mistakes each might be expected to make.

Letters can be misleading for two reasons: ignorance and personal politics, and both seem at play here. Distance from the event may lead to blurring of details. Thus Theophylaktos may have believed that Bohemond was ransomed by the embassy of Gregory on behalf of Alexios, or, in view of the panegyric elements included, he may be passing lightly over a comparative failure so as to rest more firmly on the undoubted success of the ransoming of Richard of the Principate. Certainly his encomium of Gregory’s achievements may well be inflated: a minor skirmish with Danishmend at this stage and a single garrison established to the east of the Black Sea would be good enough for most basilikoi logoi to lavish praise. Again, as in a basilikos logos,¹⁰³ he need not have referred to any

discredited, and if Gregory Gabras was the rebel of Trebizond and was following in his father’s footsteps, is it not more likely that he would have kept his father’s name? But it remains a possibility.

¹⁰³See for example Theophylaktos’ own basilikos logos to Alexios Komnenos in 1088, which fails to mention the defeat at Dristra in 1087, and makes Alexios reduce the Pechenegs to begging for mercy, whereas in fact he had asked for peace. P. Gautier, “Le discours de Théophylacte de Bulgarie à l’autocrator Alexis Ier Comnène (6 janvier 1088),” *REB* 20 (1961), 93–130 at 108; see for other examples J. Lefort, “Rhétorique et politique: Trois discours de Jean Mauropous en 1047,” *TM* 6 (1976), 265–303.

really discreditable event, so events mentioned are at least likely to be modest successes. Unlike a basilikos logos, however, the letters were voluntary: Theophylaktos did not, as in the 1080s, have to offer a year's report on his hero's doings: here he chose to. To send a letter was a political act and it is inconceivable that Theophylaktos should have written¹⁰⁴ G92 if Gregory was generally known to be in disgrace—and concern for reputation and calumny is a striking feature of the correspondence.¹⁰⁵ Letters too can give the sequence of events more accurately than a historical account: here the attack on Neocaesarea seems to be in the future.

Biography, however, especially family biography in the hands of Anna Komnene, might easily falsify events, in order to show the subject in a more favorable light, or at least to prevent him from being shown in an unfavorable one. Anna is equally well capable of making editorial slips (the fact that Gregory is not previously mentioned is not a serious argument against his surname being Taronites; it is clear that Anna did not revise her work).¹⁰⁶ But it is unlikely that she would have made a mistake about genealogy; she was very family-conscious.¹⁰⁷ So when she describes John Taronites as both the son of Alexios' elder sister and the cousin through the paternal line of Gregory the rebel we must find a rebel who answers to this description. And when she says that Gregory was an old friend of hers and Nikephoros Bryennios' and that they visited him in prison, she is hardly likely to be wrong.¹⁰⁸

Epics are usually uncertain ground for mining nuggets of truth, but while bards can confuse people and places and the order of events, and occasionally even the name of the enemy in question, it is extremely rare for an epic to present its hero dying in failure if he really died at the height of his powers.¹⁰⁹

With these generic guidelines we can proceed to

¹⁰⁴Or at any rate allowed it to survive if he had been foolish enough to send it—unless Gregory's disgrace is a figment of Anna's imagination.

¹⁰⁵His paranoia during one crisis in particular is almost datable; see G96 and G98 where his *τύχη* is at stake.

¹⁰⁶Buckler, *Anna Comnena*, 251–56.

¹⁰⁷She as well as John might have been described as *philomētōr* and *philopatōr*, *The Alexian Komnenian Muses*, ed. and trans. Jordan and Rouché, in *Alexios I Komnenos*, II; see Buckler's chapter on Anna's family relations.

¹⁰⁸It is possible that this old friend could be the hostage Gregory Gabras, but on balance it seems more likely not, especially after his attempted escape.

¹⁰⁹People: the *Nibelungenlied* has Theodoric at the court of Attila; places: the location of the activity of Arthur, or Gré-

date the letters. G81 must be shortly after May 1103 and G78 before then, but also in May. If it were May 1102 it would allow Gregory two more successful campaigns, negotiations with Bohemond on behalf of Alexios, a small defeat over him and perhaps even to have negotiated the alliance of the *Melikdanishmendname* before returning to Constantinople to a hero's welcome in the summer of 1103. In the twelfth indiction Gregory was appointed to a more permanent post in the Black Sea area, perhaps including the capture of Neocaesarea and a certain feathering of his own nest. There follows the success of his work against Danishmend, the angry exchange of letters, the charge of insanity, and the attempt to bring Gregory home. He looks like an all too successful local governor. He then did time in the Anemas tower, but was reinstated into Alexios' favor—perhaps because he had not really rebelled. The other two letters are to be placed at both ends of the chronology: G65 to his extreme youth, when he was training himself for a military career and the successes of the future;¹¹⁰ in G49 he appears to be based in Constantinople and in a civil position—perhaps part of the *δωρεὰ καὶ τιμὴ* heaped on him after his restoration to favor.¹¹¹ This is a simple solution, demanding that Theophylaktos be guilty of a few minor inaccuracies and some gilding of the lily, Anna of defense of Alexios and careless proofreading, but not genealogical blackouts, and the *Melikdanishmendname* of vagueness over the order of events, but not of unnecessary disparagement of its hero.

goire's difficulties with the place names of Digenes; enemies: the insertion of the Saracens into the *Chanson de Roland*. The survey of H. M. Chadwick and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature* (Cambridge, 1932), chap. 7, "Historical Elements in Stories of the Heroic Age" (pp. 133–98) and chap. 8, "Unhistorical Elements in Stories of the Heroic Age" (pp. 199–240), is still useful.

¹¹⁰G65. There are no forms of address, but the tone is intimate. The use of a form of address that relates the correspondent to a famous kinsman often, though not invariably, denotes an early stage in the relationship.

¹¹¹G49. This letter has been connected to another, G18, by a series of muddles. The latter is to John Taronites about a vacancy in the bishopric of Vdin (Βυθινῆ); the former asks for instructions for the official operating in Veroia in connection with the *psephisma* at Βοδηνά (Edessa). Adontz, "L'archevêque Théophylacte," connected the two by misreading Βυθινῆ for Βοδηνά in G49; Leroy-Molinghen, "Les lettres de Théophylacte," 152 gives the reading Βοδηνών, but confuses Beroe in Thrace with Veroia in Macedonia, arguing from Anna, *Alexiad*, X.ii.6, ed. Leib, II, 193 that John Taronites was the official at Veroia and that Gregory was invoked to give him instructions because he was his cousin. Gautier, "Synode de Blachernes," 236 note 52 tries to disentangle the threads, but imputes the *Alexiad*, X.ii.6 muddle to Adontz. Two separate cases are surely being discussed.

So generic considerations allow us to follow Gregory from his early military training to his successes in Pontos, crowned by his appointment in 1103, to his unfortunate arrest and perhaps to an administrative civil post thereafter.

But we can do better than this. We can also use genre to pinpoint the transactional balance of the letter and the relationship between sender and recipient. I have already alluded to the encomiastic tone of the letters, especially G78 and G81, which deal with the achievements of Gregory in bringing first victory to the empire and then pacification to Pontos. Their closest parallel are the letters to John Doukas, which I have recently analyzed¹¹² as letters to an ex-official Theophylaktos wishes to recycle as a patron. There is some element also in the Gregory letters of an attempt to establish a relationship on which Theophylaktos could, if necessary, draw (in G49?). The elements in the letters drawn from the imperial vocabulary of the basilikos logos imply (without stating) the imperial quality of Gregory; genre once again is able to say the unsayable. But there is more at stake: the forms of address show the power relations reversed, indicating a teacher-pupil relationship or, more likely, a spiritual father-spiritual son relationship.¹¹³ Here, by taking the ceremonial signals of the letter and the topoi of the included genre together, we gain insight into roles, relationships, and transactions between the participants in the correspondence.

These examples from Theophylaktos' letters enable us to see genre solving an old historiographical problem and defining relationship within a lit-

erary text. This is hardly the madness of genre,¹¹⁴ more the resources of kind.¹¹⁵ And it is hard to shake off the possibilities of genre, which is, as Jacques Derrida saw, far more liberating than constricting. Many have noticed that when we say "This work is an X," we are talking generically.¹¹⁶ So it is with Derrida: the more he flees from Gerard Genette's view of genres as natural structures,¹¹⁷ the more he becomes invaginated by the madness of genre.

There is a case for genre to be shunned by those who believe above all in the total indeterminacy of text, and by those most deeply suspicious of the intentionalism that for me is an endemic theoretical problem of the technique. But as a historian of literature and of literary society, I have no qualms in seeking to detect the "then meaning" as distinct from the "now meaning"¹¹⁸ and attempting to reconstruct what Jauss calls the "horizon of expectation"¹¹⁹ of what Stanley Fish calls an "interpretive community."¹²⁰ I take genre to be a major component of the horizon of expectations of Byzantine literary society, an interpretive community if ever there was one. I do have doubts about whether the key of genre will truly unlock the door of authorial intention. But for Kazhdan (and Franklin) there may be no such problem.

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¹¹⁴J. Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 55–81.

¹¹⁵R. L. Colie, *The Resources of Kind: Genre Theory in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1973).

¹¹⁶Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 57 ff.

¹¹⁷G. Genette, "Genres, Types, Modes," *Poétique* 8 (1977), 389–421.

¹¹⁸Fowler, *Kinds of Literature*, 256 ff.

¹¹⁹Jauss, "Literary History," (above, note 35), 25.

¹²⁰S. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Harvard, 1980).

¹¹²"Patronage in Action: The Problems of an Eleventh-century Bishop," in *Church and People in Byzantium*, ed. R. Morris (Birmingham, 1990), 125–47.

¹¹³For forms of address and relationship see my *Theophylaktos*, chap. 3.4.